

# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



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### Public Hearing: South Willamette Street Improvement Plan

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Meeting Date: May 19, 2014  
Department: Public Works  
[www.eugene-or.gov](http://www.eugene-or.gov)

Agenda Item Number: 2  
Staff Contact: Chris Henry  
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#### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

The Eugene City Council is scheduled to hold a public hearing on street design alternatives presented in the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan. The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan will develop a complete street design for an active transportation corridor (providing for walking, biking, transit, driving, and business access) that can be adopted and advanced as a capital improvement project for construction.

#### **BACKGROUND**

##### ***Purpose:***

The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan is exploring options for people to safely walk, bike, take the bus, or drive in an eight-block study area of Willamette Street from 24th Avenue to 32nd Avenue. The City and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) have contracted with a consultant team of transportation engineers and urban design planners led by DKS Associates (with assistance from OTAK), which includes Cogito, locally-based public involvement specialists.

The goal of this study is to help South Willamette Street become a vibrant urban corridor accessible by bicycle, foot, car, and bus. Today, Willamette Street is heavily used to reach many popular destinations, yet it is uninviting to people walking, biking, riding transit, and driving. For years, many residents and business owners have shared complaints about the poor conditions on Willamette Street for walking and biking and the need to do something about it.

The plan aims to support existing businesses and the commercial district's vitality; create a balanced multi-modal transportation system; further City planning efforts to identify compact growth and redevelopment opportunities; and foster a well-informed and involved community supportive of the plan.

The results of this project will serve as the street design portion of the South Willamette Concept Plan. The South Willamette Concept Plan is a pilot of the area planning process, an important strategy to accommodate growth through Envision Eugene. The Concept Plan creates a long-term

vision and identifies tools for realizing that vision in the South Willamette area. One important goal of the Concept Plan is to create a neighborhood where services for residents are available within a “20-Minute” walk, and that the street functions for a variety of users. The timing of the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan is good because it melds with the South Willamette Concept Plan, and needed pavement preservation work recently identified in the 2012 Bond Measure to Fix Streets and Fund Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects.

***Public Process:***

In August of 2012, the project team began by talking with stakeholders in small groups, including property and business owners, bicycle, pedestrian and transit advocates, and neighborhood leaders from Friendly, Crest, South Eugene, and Amazon neighborhood associations. Based on knowledge gained, in September two robust focus groups were organized (one based on business; and another based on users of cars, walking, bus, and bike) to hear more about people’s concerns, preferences and flexibilities towards identified corridor issues. In October, traffic count data was collected (when UO and LCC campuses were active) and an Existing Conditions Report was prepared. In November, over 150 participants attended the first Community Forum where they heard the results of recent traffic studies, explored alternatives, and the project team listened to community priorities for future improvements.

A second Community Forum was held in February 2013 to evaluate the alternatives that were prepared in response to earlier community conversations. Following the February Community Forum, the project team narrowed the number of alternatives down to three and performed more detailed transportation analysis.

The third, and final, Community Forum was held in June 2013. Participants were asked to help rank and refine the street design alternatives following a presentation of transportation analysis and group discussion. An online survey was also available to hear the preferences of those who were not able to attend the Community Forum.

Staff provided updates on the process to the Eugene City Council on January 28 and June 19, 2013, and presented the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan on April 16, 2014. Staff also met with the Eugene Planning Commission twice, on November 4, 2013, and again on April 7, 2014, to discuss the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan and Economic Study respectively. The May 19, 2014, public hearing was announced to the project interested parties list by email and also on the project website.

***Consultant Project Team Recommendation:***

On October 2, 2013, an executive summary of the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan and consultant project team recommendation was shared in two meetings with stakeholder groups. The consultant team will provide details of the street design alternatives in their presentation.

The Eugene City Manager has endorsed a triple-bottom-line approach to sustainability and analysis for City projects and programs providing for consideration of people, the planet, and prosperity (or equity, environment, and economy). In development of the Draft Eugene Transportation System Plan (Draft TSP), the Transportation Community Resource Group (TCRG)

extensively vetted a sustainability rating system based on a triple-bottom-line analysis. The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan adapted the TCRG sustainability work to develop screening criteria for qualitative assessment of the roadway alternatives. The results of the sustainability screening are included in the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan and helped to inform the consultant project team recommendation.

In weighing all the considerations identified in the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan, the community feedback and technical analysis, **the consultant project team finds that Alternative #3 (3-lanes with Bike Lanes) represents the best solution for South Willamette Street.**

***Coordination with Envision Eugene:***

As previously stated, the results of the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan will serve as the street design portion of the South Willamette Concept Plan, a pilot of the area planning process for Envision Eugene. The Concept Plan includes a long-term vision for redevelopment of the streetside character of Willamette Street that is compatible with the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan alternatives. Staff will be working with the Eugene Planning Commission, as part of the Concept Plan implementation, to develop a systematic approach in the Eugene Code to address how accesses along the street are managed over time. Those discussions are anticipated to be coming soon to the Eugene Planning Commission followed by Eugene City Council adoption at a later date.

***Resources:***

The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan is being managed by the City of Eugene and is funded with a grant from the Transportation and Growth Management program of the Oregon Department of Transportation.

More details of the project and public involvement process are available at: <http://www.eugene-or.gov/SWillametteStreet>

**RELATED CITY POLICIES**

During their deliberations, the Eugene City Council will have an opportunity to consider the policy context surrounding the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan. The council may choose to affirm existing policies, balance potential conflicts between policies, approve potential changes to existing policies or enact new policies.

**TransPlan (2002)**

**System-Wide Policy #4: Neighborhood Livability**

*Support transportation strategies that enhance neighborhood livability.*

**Roadway Policy #1: Mobility and Safety for all Modes**

*Address the mobility and safety needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians, and the needs of emergency vehicles when planning and constructing roadway system improvements.*

## **Roadway Policy #2: Motor Vehicle Level of Service**

1. *Use motor vehicle level of service standards to maintain acceptable and reliable performance on the roadway system.*
2. *Acceptable and reliable performance is defined by the following levels of service under peak hour traffic conditions: Level of Service E within Eugene's Central Area Transportation Study (CATS) area, and Level of Service D elsewhere.*

## **Roadway Policy #4: Access Management**

*Manage the roadway system to preserve safety and operational efficiency by adopting regulations to manage access to roadways and applying these regulations to decisions related to approving new or modified access to the roadway system.*

## **Bicycle Policy #1: Bikeway System and Support Facilities**

*Construct and improve the region's bikeway system and provide bicycle system support facilities for both new development and redevelopment/expansion.*

## **Bicycle Policy #2: Bikeways on Arterials and Collectors**

*Require bikeways along new and reconstructed arterial and major collector streets.*

## **Bicycle Policy #4: Implementation of Priority Bikeway Miles**

*Give funding priority (ideally within the first three to five years after adoption of TransPlan subject to available funding) to stand-alone bikeway projects that are included in the definition of "Priority Bikeway Miles" and that increase the use of alternative modes.*

## **Pedestrian Policy #1: Pedestrian Environment**

*Provide for a pedestrian environment that is well integrated with adjacent land uses and is designed to enhance the safety, comfort, and convenience of walking.*

## **Goods Movement Policy #1: Freight Efficiency**

*Support reasonable and reliable travel times for freight/goods movement in the Eugene-Springfield region.*

## **Finance Policy #5: Short-Term Project Priorities**

*Consider and include among short-term project priorities, those facilities and improvements that support mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly nodal development and increased use of alternative modes.*

**Priority Bikeway System Project #296** – Striped bike lanes, Willamette Street from 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (unprogrammed).

## **Eugene Pedestrian Bicycle Master Plan (2012)**

**Policy 1.1:** *Make bicycling and walking more attractive than driving for trips of two miles or less.*

**Policy 1.2:** *Increase pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between existing residential*

*neighborhoods and nearby commercial areas, parks, and schools.*

**Policy 1.5:** *Construct high-quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to provide safer, more appealing and well-connected facilities.*

**Policy 1.6:** *Build pedestrian and bicycle facilities on new roadways, and retrofit older roadways to complete the pedestrian and bicycle system, using routes and facility designs identified in this plan.*

**Policy 1.7:** *Construct bikeways along new and reconstructed arterial and major collector streets.*

**Policy 2.1:** *Continually improve bicycling and walking comfort and safety through design, operations and maintenance including development of “low stress” bikeways to attract new cyclists.*

**Policy 3.6:** *Improve the quality of the pedestrian environment by including facilities such as planter strips and street trees in the design or reconstruction of streets and consider preservation of existing trees whenever practicable.*

**20-Minute Neighborhoods Program:** *Development of a 20-Minute Neighborhoods Program is considered a key implementation step of the Climate and Energy Action Plan. 2- minute neighborhoods are places where people can easily walk or bike to key destinations such as grocery stores, other retail establishments, parks and schools. Coordination between implementation of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and the 20-Minute Neighborhoods Program will be critical to the success of both. The 20-Minute Neighborhoods Program should be one factor that is considered when determining project funding priorities.*

**Bike Lane Project #31** – Willamette Street from 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

**Bike Boulevard Project #397** – Portland Alley from W24<sup>th</sup> Avenue to W27<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**Bike Boulevard Project #458** – E 29th Place/Pearl Street/E 28th Avenue/High Street/E 27th Avenue from Amazon Parkway to Willamette Street.

## **Envision Eugene (2012)**

### **7 Pillars of Envision Eugene (partial list)**

- *Provide ample economic opportunities for all community members*
- *Plan for climate change and energy uncertainty*
- *Promote compact urban development and efficient transportation options*
- *Protect, repair, and enhance neighborhood livability*
- *Provide for adaptable, flexible, and collaborative implementation*

## **COUNCIL OPTIONS**

None. This is a public hearing only and no action is required at this time. Deliberation and action is scheduled for May 27, 2014.

## **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

The City Manager recommends that the Mayor and Eugene City Council convene the public hearing.

The analyses from the consultants and staff suggest that street design Alternative #3 (three-lane configuration with bike lanes) may be the best alternative. However, before making a final decision, the City Manager recommends that the City undertake a test-run. A test-run of that alternative would allow staff to determine whether the modeling is correct and whether there are any unintended consequences before any permanent changes are made.

Therefore, the opportunities with a test are to confirm the transportation analysis of the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan, determine if there are any unintended consequences, and provide a real experience of a street reconfiguration for people driving cars.

Therefore, the City Manager recommends that the City Council approve moving forward with a 12-month test of street design Alternative #3 (three-lane configuration with bike lanes). At the conclusion of that test, City staff would return to the City Council with the additional information and data, along with a recommendation as to whether the City Manager believes that three-lane configuration still appears to be the best alternative.

During their deliberation and action scheduled for May 27, 2014, the City Manager recommends that the Mayor and Eugene City Council direct staff to implement a test of street design alternative #3 (three lanes with bike lanes) and report back with findings after a 12-month test period.

## **SUGGESTED MOTION**

None.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

None.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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